

JOANNA GRZYBEK,
JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3629-9273

MARIA SZTUKA,
JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY
ORCID ID: 0000-0001-9060-5860

**IN SEARCH OF
HONORIFICATIVITY IN CHINESE
ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL
DOCUMENTS – HONORIFIC
PREFIXES IN LEGAL NOTES (
通知书), APPLICATIONS (申请
书) AND APPLIES (上诉状)**

In recent years, the Chinese for special purposes has become one of the major foci in studies of Chinese language use and translation. Communication is a social process influenced by the orientations of interpersonal relationships and

philosophical foundations¹. Politeness in China is deep-rooted in cultural values and ideology. It also concerns the perception of power relations, concept of self and other, and understanding of relationships². Courtesy serves to achieve harmony and results from 礼 *li* – the respect expressed by words and deeds. The meaning of *li* covers rituals and etiquette, civil rights and customs, norms of moral conduct and ethics in thinking, feeling and acting³. It can be traced back to Confucius, whose teaching has become part of the Chinese language and way of thinking. One must speak properly and appropriately⁴. Etiquette and formality can be expressed verbally, for instance by honorifics.

The language politeness shows the relationships between participants of language situations⁵. Power sharing is highly respected and visible in relations between authorities and people. This kind of hierarchical politeness system may be widely recognized among government and educational organizations and business entities, in which the speakers resort to different politeness strategies⁶. Honorifics convey important information on people and their relationships in written text as well⁷. According to Huszcza⁸ among the East Asian languages, that had been formed in the Confucian tradition, Chinese (a language

1 M. Hui, M. Meng, Y. Hui, *A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Honorifics in Modern Chinese and American English*, "Across-Cultural Communication" Vol. 12, No. 11, 2016, p. 7.

2 Y. Pan, *Politeness in Chinese Face-to-Face Interaction*, Stanford 2000.

3 X. Yao, *Konfucjanizm. Wprowadzenie*. Kraków 2009, p. 193.

4 Vide: D. Cao, *Chinese Language in Law. Code Red*, Lanham 2018, p. 3.

5 R. Huszcza, *Honoryfikatywność. Gramatyka. Pragmatyka. Typologia*, Warszawa 1996, p. 51.

6 G. Liang, J. Han, *A Contrastive Study of Disagreement Strategies for Politeness Between American English and Mandarin Chinese*, "Asian EFL Journal" Vol. 7, No. 1, March 2005, p. 1.

7 D. Xiong, J. Xu, Q. Lu, F. Lo, *Recognition and Extraction of Honorifics in Chinese Diachronic Corpora*, In: H. Su, T. He (Eds.), CLSW 2014, LNAI 8922, 2014, p. 306.

8 R. Huszcza, *Honoryfikatywność...*, p. 242.

that started this tradition) has the least-developed grammatical and lexical categories of honorificativity.

This work is an attempt to investigate honorific prefixes in address titles, which occur in Chinese administrative and legal texts. In order to know more about Chinese language for special purposes the study was intended to investigate if there is the inequality of communication roles resulting from the authority whose courts and offices are representatives⁹.

THE RESEARCH CORPORA

The research corpora encompassed Chinese administrative and legal texts. The study aimed to investigate personalized and personal communication situations, documented in statements addressed to someone¹⁰. Statements addressed by the personalized sender to the administrative institutions or court were also analyzed. The authors analyzed around 200 texts written in language for special purposes – different types of administrative and legal notes, applications, applies (通知书 *tongzhishu*, 申请书 *shenqingshu*, 上诉状 *shangsuzhuang*).

Administrative language is the language of official documents, related to the activity of offices or other administrative bodies and issued by an office or by a person that communicates with another office, or between two administrative institutions (or: two offices). The main features of administrative language are: rigidity and formality. The term „administrative language” (公文 *gongwen*) refers to the entire extended¹¹ yet open group

9 Vide: M. Hadryan, *Demokratyzacja języka urzędowego. Współczesne tendencje polityki językowej w Szwecji i w Polsce*, Poznań 2015, p. 162.

10 T. Gizbert-Studnicki, *Język prawny z perspektywy socjolingwistycznej*, Kraków 1986, p. 54.

11 X. Shu舒雪冬 (Ed.), *Gongwen xiezuo fanlie daquan* 公文写作反例大全, Beijing 2016, p. 2.

of statements related to the sphere of lawmaking and its application, administrative activities and various institutions with function based on legal principles¹². Legal language (法律语言 *falìyǔyán*) is the language of legal authors, legislators, judges, administrators, advocates, professionals who are not lawyers properly so-called (jury-members, lay judges, administrators) and citizens who write their own wills or other documents following a model form¹³. It is considered as a formal variant of the ordinary Chinese language¹⁴ and authoritative and restraining medium of law¹⁵.

HONORIFIC PREFIXES IN CHINESE ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL TEXTS

Honorific is an expression or title used for the purpose of establishing and maintaining various interpersonal relationships¹⁶. From ancient times to the modern age, many honorifics have changed alongside the transformation of political systems and development of economy and culture. The complexity of the administrative systems and the variety of the honorifics used throughout history make it difficult to identify honorifics¹⁷.

Chinese legal and administrative language contains honorifics, which convey formality and politeness. Courtesy means,

12 M. Wojtak, *Gatunki urzędowe na tle innych typów piśmiennictwa użytkowego – zarys problematyki*, In: E. Malinowska (Ed.), *Język, prawo, społeczeństwo*, Opole 2004, p. 131.

13 H. Mattila, *Comparative Legal Linguistics: Language of Law, Latin and Modern Lingua Francas*, Farnham 2013, p. 1-2.

14 J. J. Song, *The Oxford Handbook of Linguistic Typology*, Oxford 2010, p. 4.

15 J. Du 杜金榜, *法律语言学*, Shanghai 2004, p.1.; L. Song Lei 宋雷, *英汉对比法律语言学*. Beijing 2010, p. 4.

16 M. Hui, M. Meng, Y. Hui, (2016), *A Cross-Cultural...*, p. 7.

17 D. Xiong, J. Xu, Q. Lu, F. Lo, *Recognition ...*, pp. 305-306.

inter alia, modesty and respect¹⁸. Gu formulated the principles of courtesy, i.e. the principle of self-denigration, addressing, tact and generosity. The self-denigration maxim consists of two submaxims:

- i. denigrate self and
- ii. elevate other¹⁹.

The principle of self-denigration may be observed in statements addressed to courts and offices.

The principle of addressing is to address an addressee using the appropriate title. The term "title" refers to names of professions, clerical positions or proper names and surnames, as well as terms describing relations, as well as the so-called address politeness markers²⁰. Forms of addressing depend also on the attitude towards an addressee. The author of a statement can depreciate his own value in relation to the addressee of the statement, to show him full respect. The language etiquette observed in contemporary official texts shapes relations between an addresser (sender) of a statement and an addressee (receiver). The language courtesy applied in citizen's statements to courts or offices shows that addressers accept inferiority in relation to addressees and thus show them respect.

Different honorific prefixes used in official texts provide addressees with a sense of superiority over citizens. Honorific prefixes take the form of both honorificative, address vocabulary and personal pronoun²¹. The noun appellative honorifics include general appellative honorifics, kinship appellative

18 Y. Gu, Politeness Phenomena in Modern Chinese [in:] *Journal of Pragmatics* 1990/14, 1990, pp. 248-249.

19 Y. Ma, The Study of the Chinese Speech Act, [in:] *Intercultural Communication Studies* XVII: 1. 2008. n. 211.

20 Y. Gu, Politeness..., pp. 248-249.

21 Vide: R. Huszcza, *Honoryfikatywność...*, p. 28. Honorific forms also take adjectives and verbs, which are enriched with prefixes and suffixes (vide: ibidem, p. 74).

honorifics, sub-kinship appellative honorifics, rank appellative honorifics, aged appellative honorifics, professional appellative honorifics, and diplomatic appellative honorifics. They are addressed to persons²². There are also expressive honorific morphemes, which are used to modify things or actions²³.

The honorific modifiers observed in research corpora include:

- the prefix 贵 *gui* and
- the prefix 本 *ben*.

The honorific prefix 贵 *gui* (honorable) is related to the concept of 贵贱 *guijian* (worthy, honorable people with power and money). This prefix is used for persons and other things such as 贵国 *guiguo* and 贵报 *guibao* affiliated to the addressee for the purposes of formality and respect, as well. The pronoun 贵 replaces the pronoun 'your'. The honorific prefix 本 *ben*, rooted in imperial bureaucracy, occurs in contemporary documents for the purpose of formality and respect. It refers to oneself with the third-person descriptor, or for things affiliated to oneself, i.e. 本公司 *bengongsi* (our company). The prefix 本 occurs also with the abbreviated form of the noun, i.e. 法院 *benyuan*²⁴ means 'a court' and functions as the address name of the addressee of a document²⁵. What is interesting the name of the citizen as the addressee is formulated with the regular second-person pronoun 你 *ni*, not replaced by the honorific second-person pronoun 您 *nin*. The hierarchy of an authority

22 M. Hui, M. Meng, Y. Hui, (2016), *A Cross-Cultural...*, p. 7-8.

23 Ibidem. n. 9.

24 S. Zhu 朱深远, *Shangshi shenpan shiwu jineng* 商事审判实务技能, Beijing 2013, p.179.

25 In legal texts the prefix 本 functions very often as a demonstrative pronoun, vide: H. Wang 王还. *Hanyu xuci cidian* 汉语虚词词典, Beijing 1992, p. 15, i.e. 所签运单作为本协议的附件与本协议具有同等的法律效力 Y. Sun, Y. Han 孙璞, 韩杨, *Guoji huowu yunshu shiwu yu anli* 国际货物运输实务与案例, Beijing 2009, p. 300.

above a citizen is reflected in language.

HONORIFIC PREFIXES IN CHINESE NOTICES (通知书)

The Chinese term „notice” (通知书 *tongzhishu*, 通知单 *tongzhidan*) refers to a document that contains relevant information. The content of the notice generally include the object of notification, the main message, the payee – if necessary, and the date. In everyday life, common notices include various types. In this paper, authors have analysed different types of ‘Notice of Termination of the Administrative Reconsideration’ (行政复议终止通知书), ‘Suspension of Business Notice’ (停业整顿通知书), ‘Notice of Dunning’ (催款通知书), ‘Notice of Arrears of Property Fees’ (欠物业费通知书), ‘Notice of Payment of Arrears of Property Fees’ (催缴欠物业费通知书), ‘Notice of Suspension of Production and Rectification’ (企业停产整顿通知书 (存根)), ‘Notice of Disciplinary Warning to Employees’ (员工违纪告诫通知书) and ‘Notice of Bids Winning’ 中标通知书 and different types of notices written in a court during civil procedure.

The honorific prefix 本 occurs in the address name of the addressee of a document, when referring to:

- i. ‘the man’ 本人 *benren*, i.e.:

恳请上级领导考虑本人的实际情况，解决我的工作难题。（调换工作岗位通知书）

- ii. ‘the court’ 本院 *benyuan*, i.e.:

(...)（写明申请再审人的姓名或名称）因于你（你单位）(...)（案由）解纷一案，不服 (...) 人民法院于 (...) 年 (...) 月 (...) 日作出的(...)号民事判决（裁定或调解书），向本院申请再审，本院已立案审查（人民法院受理通知书），

or

iii. ‘the authority, the institution’ 本机关 *benjiguan*, i.e.:
诉讼期限仍不履行本通知, 本机关将申请人民法院
强制执行。(罚款催缴通知书)

However, most of the analysed documents contain the
regular second person pronoun 你 in the address name of the
addressee. i.e. 你单位 *nidanwei* (your unit), which corresponds
with the first person pronoun 我 *wo*, i.e.: 我中心, 我局, 我们,
我场, i.e.:

我中心因受被上诉人的错误行政处罚, 使信誉及经
营活动受到很大影响。(机械服务中心行政上诉状)

根据《电信业务经营许可管理办法》第三十九条
规定, 未按规定参加年检的单位, 我局可依法责令改
正, 并给予相应的行政处罚;按时改正的, 为经整改年检
合格;拒不改正的, 为年检不合格。(酒店停业整顿通知
书)

我们认为, 这种处罚是错误的。(机械服务中心行
政上诉状)

你(你单位)不服_____ (被申请人的具体行政行
为)提出的行政复议申请, 我们依法已予受理。(行政
复议终止通知书范本)

你与被告xxx _____ (写明案由)纠纷, 本院与
xxxx年xx月xx日裁定(。。。)(补交诉讼费通知书)

你应在收到本通知书后七日内向本院补交案件受理
费xxx元。(补交诉讼费通知书)

因你在我场创办的漳州市汇盛包装制品有限公司企
业存在重大安全隐患, 限你自接到本通知之日, 立即停
产整顿, 落实相关措施, 经验收合格后方可恢复生产。
(企业停产整顿通知书(存根))

The honorific 贵 *gui* occurred only in administrative notices when referring to ‘a company’ (贵司) (literally: ‘your honourable company’), ‘a factory’ (我厂), or ‘a unit’ (贵单元) as the addressee of a document. The person pronoun 我 *wo* is often used when referring to sender of a notice, i.e.: 我司 (literally: ‘my company’).

如贵司仍不能按期支付, 我司将按有关规定(或约定)向贵司追索欠款利息, 甚至采取相关法律措施, 届时, 贵公司可能要承担诉讼而带来的更大损失。 篇八 : 装修催款通知书范本) .

感谢贵司对我司的支持, 选择我司产品, 与我司建立友好合作关系。(篇一: 催款通知书)

如恶意欠费, 我司将保留追究法律责任的权利。(欠物业费通知书)

请贵公司收到此通知书后 _____天内将上述逾期未付的货款汇付我公司帐户(户名: ××××; 开户行: ××××; 帐号: ××××)。(篇一: 催款通知书)

如有特殊情况, 望及时和我厂财务部×××联系。(催款通知书)

至 年月止, 贵单元的物业费共计人民币 元(大写:)尚未缴交。(篇五: 催缴通知书1)

(...) 阁下, 贵账户之款项已经过期而仍未清付, 请以人民币_____元支票支付, 交回本公司。(催缴通知书(二))

根据《电信业务经营许可管理办法》第三十九条规定, 未按规定参加年检的单位, 我局可依法责令改正, 并给予相应的行政处罚; 按时改正的, 为经整改年检合格; 拒不改正的, 为年检不合格。(酒店停业整顿通知书)

如恶意欠费, 我司将保留追究法律责任的权利。(欠物业费通知书)

至今尚未支付给我厂，影响了我厂资金周转。（催款通知书）

However, the person pronoun 你 occurred as well in a context marked by formality, i.e.:

你（你单位）不服_____（被申请人的具体行政行为）提出的行政复议申请，我们依法已予受理。（行政复议终止通知书范本）

因你在我场创办的漳州市汇盛包装制品有限公司企业存在重大安全隐患，限你自接到本通知之日，立即停产整顿，落实相关措施，经验收合格后方可恢复生产。（企业停产整顿通知书）

HONORIFIC PREFIXES IN CHINESE APPLICATIONS (申请书)

The Chinese term 申请书 *shenqingshu* (an application) refers to a type of document, used by individuals or groups to express their wishes and make requests to courts, organizations, agencies, enterprises, institutions or social organizations. The application form has a wide range of uses. The application form is also a special type of correspondence. It is also a tool for expressing expressions like ordinary correspondence. The application requires discussion on a case-by-case basis and the content must be simple. There are many types of different applications, and the common ones are applications for membership and party membership.

The honorific prefix 本 is used in some applications when referring to a court 本院 to rank its authority, i.e.:

申请人于_____年_____月_____日向_____本院提出申请，请求对已达成的调解协议予以司法确认。

However, the use of prefix 本 is not regular. The prefix 你 is also used when referring to a court (你院).

你院起诉，你院已立案受理 (民事撤诉申请书)

The person pronoun 我 is often used when referring to sender of a notice, i.e.:

让我们能早日过上正常的生活，我们全家万分：困难户建房补助申请书

感谢：“让我们能早日过上正常的生活，我们全家万分感谢”。困难户建房补助申请书

我公司于被告购销合同拖欠货款一案，你院已于____年10月10日受理。

HONORIFIC PREFIXES IN CHINESE APPEALS (上诉, 申诉)

The Chinese term *shangsu* 上诉 (appeal), also known as 申诉²⁶ refers to appeal filed with the People's Court at the next higher level in two different situations: i. if a party refuses to accept judgment (*panjue* 判决) of the first-instance People's Court awarded in either contentious or non-contentious civil procedure; ii. if a party refuses to accept a ruling (*caiding* 裁定) of the first-instance People's Court awarded during contentious or non-contentious civil procedure.

The administrative appeal *xingzheng shangsu zhuang* 行政上诉状 means, that the parties of the administrative lawsuit are dissatisfied with the administrative judgment or ruling of the first instance of the local people's courts at all levels, and within the statutory appeal period, the parties appeal to the people's court at the next higher level, requesting the revocation or change of the original written judgment. Article 85 of the "Administrative Procedural Law" stipulates: "A party who refuses to accept the judgment of the first instance of the people's

26 J. Grzybek, X. Fu, *Contrastive Parametric Study of Legal Terminology in Polish and Chinese Application of Parametric Approach to Comparison of Legal Terminology between Polish and Chinese for Translation Purposes*, Poznań 2017, p. 94.

court shall have the right to appeal to the people's court at the next higher level within 15 days from the date of service of the judgment. A ruling has the right to appeal to the people's court at the next higher level within ten days from the date of service of the ruling. If the appeal is not filed within the time limit, the first judgment or ruling of the people's court has legal effect". The parties must exercise the right of appeal and file an appeal without the object of the appeal, that is, the judgments and rulings of the first instance of local people's courts that have no legal effect. The appeal shall be filed through the people's court of the first instance. If the parties appeal directly to the court of second instance, the court of second instance shall transfer the appeal to the court of first instance within 5 days according to law. After the appeal is accepted, the case enters the second instance proceedings.

The honorific 贵 occurs when referring to a court, i.e.:

贵法院：请求：贵法院判决撤销xx市中级人民法院(2xx3)宁行初字第000xx号行政判决书判决，撤销被上诉人宁公（西）行决字(2xx3)第342号《公安行政处罚决定书》的决定，以支持上诉人的一审行政上诉请求。（原告行政上诉状范本1）。

贵：我诚恳地希望您能提出宝贵意见意见或建议（各种升职加薪申请书范文）

However the prefix 你 occurs also in a context marked by asymmetrical role-relationships and formality, i.e.:

向你院上诉：为了维护上诉人的合法权益，依法追究被上诉人及其工作人员的行政侵权赔偿责任，纠正其错误，特依《行政诉讼法》第58条之规定，向你院上诉，请求依法公正地审理此案，撤销原判决，并改判，责成被上诉人赔偿所造成的经济损失。（行政上诉状范文）

SUMMARY

When addressing one's superiors, Chinese have traditionally used language that is more respectful than that used for people of "lower status". The analysis of selected documents leads to the conclusion that honorific prefixes, which occur in Chinese official texts serve to express hierarchy and courtesy. The language etiquette observed in contemporary official texts shapes relations between an addresser (sender) of a statement and an addressee (receiver). The language courtesy applied in some citizen's statements to courts or offices shows that addressers accept inferiority in relation to addressees and thus show them respect. In turn, the directive features of notes addressed to the citizens by administrative offices or courts testify to the superiority of authority over subordinates reflected in the language of the documents.

The data and analysis of selected administrative and legal documents were to focus on the way Chinese employ honorific prefixes 贵 *gui* and 本 *ben* as politeness strategies in official communication, by using prefixes. Although Chinese has evolved a complex system of honorifics to designate relationships²⁷ administrative and legal notes, applications and applies do not contain many honorifics. However the research corpora contain other types of expressive honorific words and phrases, and sentences, such as: 特此申请, 特此通知; 敬启者; 尊敬的; 顺颂安祺, etc. Indeed the study of honorificativity in Chinese language for special purposes, especially in administrative and legal documents, is a valid and fertile field of further research. Understanding the Chinese notion of politeness can provide guidance in the observation and study of Chinese legal language

27 Vide: M. Hui, M. Meng, Y. Hui, (2016), *A Cross-Cultural...*

and administrative language. One of the factors that influence language use such as the authority whose courts and offices are representatives need to be considered in further study.

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